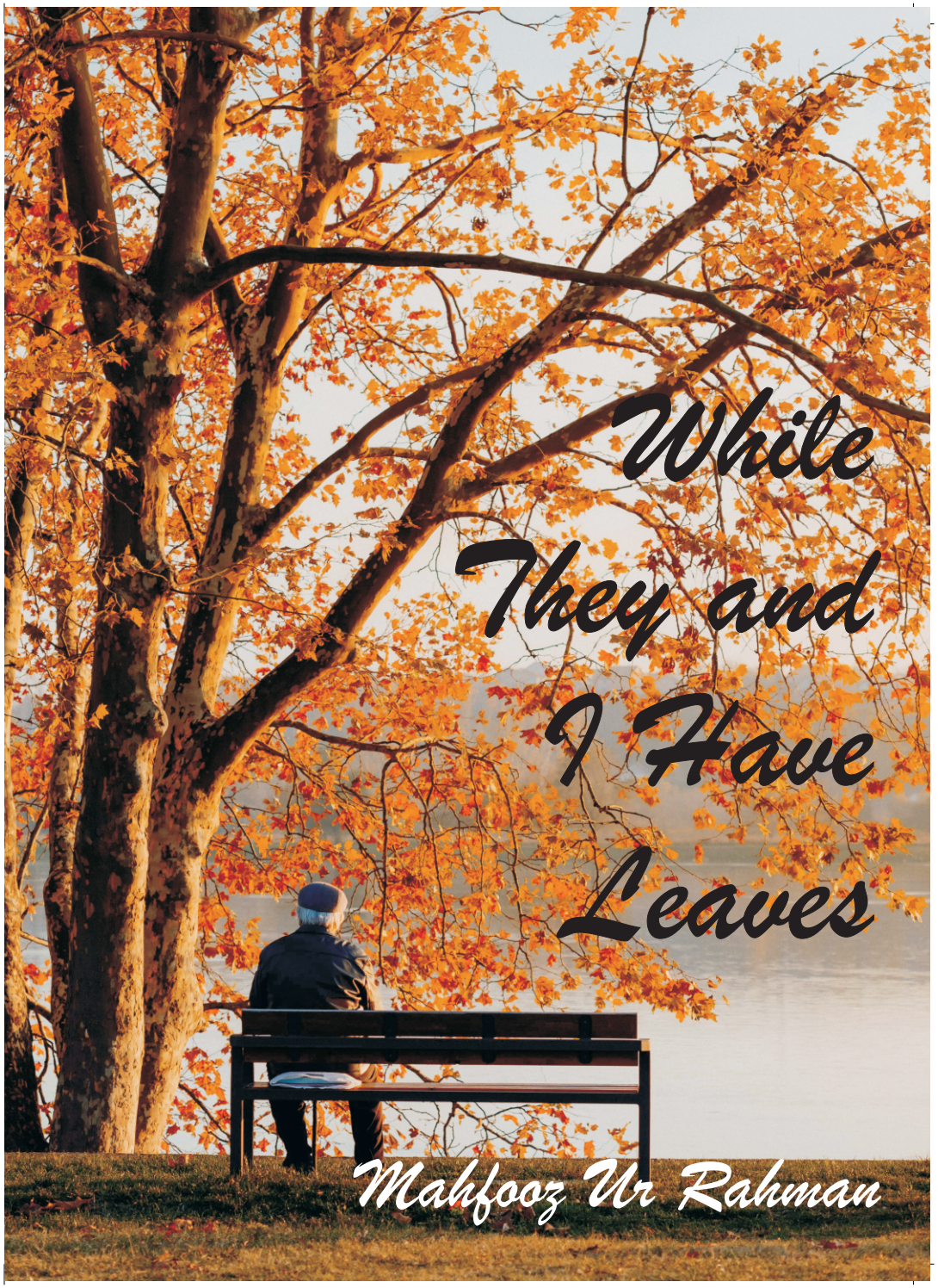
About the Author

A haematopathologist by education and a poet at heart, Dr. Mahfooz ur Rahman has dedicated 36 years to public service nationally and internationally. Serving as a Professor of Pathology, Director Blood Transfusion Services and as Consultant Pathologist. He has contributed significantly to healthcare especially in blood transfusion in Pakistan.

Born with an enduring love for literature, he cultivated this passion through his early studies at St. Anthony's High School and later at The Government College and King Edward Medical College, wherefrom he graduated in 1983. Balancing his career in medicine with his literary inclinations, he has composed evocative poetry that reflects a profound understanding of life, love, and social disparities.

Married to a histopathologist a proud father of three daughters, he brings a unique perspective to his work-an interplay of science and art, reason and emotion. ***"While They and I Have Leaves"*** is a testament to his lifelong journey of blending these worlds, offering readers a glimpse into his soul through the lens of poetry.



"And it would be the same were no house near
over all sorts of weather, men and times
Aspens must shake their leaves and men may hear,
but need not listen more than to my rhymes.

Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves,
we cannot other than an aspen be
that ceaselessly, unreasonably, grieves
or so men think who like a different tree."

'Aspens' (Edward Thomas).

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my dear wife Gul Naz, our wonderful children
Shamseen & Khalid, Afsheen & Usman, Mehreen & Roohan
and our lovely grandchildren
Minaal, Mekael, Rayaan and Asad.

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EPITAPH OF A MOSQUITO

I wonder where it went,
To find it, I was bent.
I looked around, high and low
But alas, it refused to show.

I scratched my head; could it be dead?
No, it's bitten me twice instead!
I'll catch it now and make it pay,
Though it flits like a jet away.

With its mad, mod music buzzing near,
It wreaks havoc I've had it, my dear!
The next time I see it soaring high,
I swear, I'll swat it from the sky.

The lab says its blood matches O
They've asked for more, but it won't know.
For when it comes, with stealthy hum,
I'll strike it down, my war's begun!

No, I'm not at the clinic's door,
This injection mimics something more.
O mosquito, you'll soon be through,
No one can veto what I'll do!

So let it be known, far and wide,
I'll bury you with your insect pride.
Seven feet deep, beneath the ground,
Where your buzzing ghost won't be found!

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AN INTRODUCTION TO MY POETRY

What is poetry? It cannot be crystallized into a single sentence or phrase; it is both a release of emotions and thoughts meant to serve the individual and society. Partly, it is the revelation of one's inner mind, thoughts that have taken up permanent residence in the recesses of the poet's consciousness. It is the poet's life, existence, and interactions with the world. Poetry reveals the environment that shapes the poet's mind, making the intangible legible.

Whatever poetry is and whatever purpose it serves, for me it is a vehicle of escape. It is like the chariot of ancient mythologies that takes you high without crossing the barriers of mortality. It offers sensory relief, an induction of 'morphism', as though I have "emptied some dull opiate to the drains." It provides comfort in hours of desolation and despair. Though I regard poetry as an escape, an instrument of evasion, I am always anchored to the shores of reality. "I do not delight in just turning rhyming somersaults," but in expressing the inexpressible, not hiding my meaning in a dense forest of words but striving for clarity, to be easily understood and convey my thoughts in totality.

My themes, usually personal, often have a universal appeal. I may be caught red-handed (I hope the word isn't improper) brooding over the brevity of life, the darkness of human deeds, unjust social conventions, and disparities. I put down things as I see them, as I feel them from my own terrace. What I say, I believe it to be that way. At least, I hope it is. I do not claim to be always right. Thus, my poetry can be called a poetry of feelings that strives to move the sense of emotion.

Poetry is mysticism to some extent, but I have no desire to probe life's mysteries in isolation. I seek to understand humanity's associations with everything, in symbiosis. We pursue our own courses, yet we can cast our shadows on others.

Sometimes, in the undertones, I urge mankind to discover the means of just, equal, and peaceful co-existence. Literary revolutions work their magic, as while you read and re-read, like music played, a whole eternity may passby. How magnificent is the poetry, which shows the "inhumanity and cruelty

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I KNOW A MAN

I know a man
he never sticks to any plan!
He's sweet as sour cream, they say,
or maybe meat left to decay!

When he walks, the ground does quake,
some think it's a volcanic shake!
I've heard his chatter quite a feat,
it's parrots' gossip on repeat.
No, he isn't all that bad,
he's just a little, slightly mad!

He gulps down food with snake-like grace,
a feast is written on his face!
He eyes each pie with hungry glee,
those almond eyes can't hide the plea.
Dieting? Oh, not his route
he sucks his thumb till proteins sprout!
So fat, so round, a massive chap,
he makes folks stop to stare and clap.

As he strolls by the weather station,
seismic waves cause some frustration.
The topic of the town, it's clear,
a buzzing bee we hold so dear!

RIGMAROLE

In endless ladders rose the smoke,
"Up after me," declared the fly.
The buffalo blinked beneath the yoke,
"How many miles high?"

The wren whistled sharp from the oak,
its tune both shrill and dry.
A little girl paused for a sip of Coke,
When out sprang a fly!

The raven croaked with a raspy choke,
"Shall I put it on the hi-fi?"
The dormouse grinned as it chewed its pork,
"I don't get it but I'll try!"

A little boy scowled at the runny yolk,
And put his plate by.
Was it the smoke, or some hidden joke,
Or was he just a nasty fry?

under the garb of civilization," and the spirit of imagination struggling against the mind-forged manacles of convention, reason, and law. That is unique, for then the poet must be truthful in the honest sense of the word, fully committed to what he chooses to express.

Man must not lose his power to think. Vision can discover new lands and build new edifices. The gross materialism of the world should not corrupt our power to imagine, looking beyond existing horizons to see today in the perspective of tomorrow. In short, we must look to the sun, which darkens the night and lights up the day that is to say the future.

Poetry must remain attuned to change; today, the world has moved far from where it stood during the Keatsian era. The poet must, therefore, capture the fleeting moments whose images connect and stir, even if only for a brief second. It is in this fleeting connection that poetry reveals its power. While some might focus on the decorative, often the peeling of those layers goes unnoticed, and people fail to grasp what the poet is truly aiming for.

My poems are often distant from the traditional formalisms of poetry. They may not appear to be meticulously planned, nor do they necessarily follow a clear progression of thought. At times, they take on a form of spontaneous creation almost as if during an invasion of thought, the lines emerge without order or structure, driven by raw emotion and experience. My verses often reflect a certain disorientation, an intoxication of sorts, or perhaps a wandering through the landscapes of my own metamorphosis. The cumulative effect of these moments is not form but feeling.

I have leapt into the sea of poetry without concern for its formalities because I believe that any poem which "works on our nerves, ends with a taste in the head or a small shudder in the spine," serves its purpose. Consequently, none of my poems strictly adhere to a particular pattern or form. They may carry the rhythm of rhyme, yet they exist more as expressions of thought than as rigid verse.

In introducing you to my work, I offer no pretense of permanence or perfection in my verses. There may be echoes of other voices, imitations, or influences these are inevitable, as they are after all the same way in which I learned to speak.
However, it is not for me to dwell on the ideas or technicalities behind them, for my poems themselves speak louder than any analysis. Here, I seek only to show you the rawness of my words, why I write, and what has shaped my scribbling hand.

It is important to clarify that when speaking of one's work, the measure is not against those greater than oneself but rather against one's own previous efforts. As Phyllis McGinley wisely put it, "my yardstick is my own talent and how well I have used it."

Finally, what remains to be said is simple. I do not claim to predict the success of my poems, nor am I a prophet of their place in literary history. That, dear readers, is for you to determine; but I do suspect that some may wonder why I continue with this pursuit of poetry when I could dedicate myself entirely to my medical practice by spending more time on "plasters, pills, and ointment boxes." To them, I can only say that the journey through words is as vital as any endeavor---its value lies in its own right, regardless of where it leads and whatever its outcome.

MAHFOOZ UR RAHMAN

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1st Professional MBBS in Retrospect

A Hirudo leech, relentless and sly,
Drains your blood as days slip by.
Fatigue so chronic, the ergogram sighed,
Extrasystoles danced, the cardiogram lied.
Was that acromegaly… or just my pride?

Books stacked high, a fortress at home,
Lectures endured in a monotone drone.
Was it ketosteroid… or acetone?

Funiculus separans what a name,
Triggers area postrema's claim.
Diarrheomimetic? A sure enema!
Short on underwears?
The overall's the savior in drama!

Severe ketosis, hypoproteinemia,
Examination of anatmophysiologemia.

COUNTRYMEN

Countrymen, take pride in this sacred land,
March towards prosperity, hand in hand.
Relentlessly strive to banish all vice,
Celebrate unity, with hearts and voices concise.

Seek joy in easing another's despair,
Give solace, a touch of tender care.
Restore the wren's home, so fragile yet bold,
And bring peace to pillows, where dreams unfold.

Think not of yourselves, but give and share,
Build Heaven for others in Hell's despair.
Hold fast to faith, let steadfastness bloom,
Integrity's fall must herald great gloom.

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IN SEARCH OF

Echo upon echo, it fell,
A mournful sound, a tolling bell.
From the tap, a steady stream,
like grief that haunts my every dream.

I walked the world, its hues to see,
Through masks of men, through destiny.
My weary legs can bear no more,
My soles are stained with wounds of strive.

O hope, keep my spirit high,
O heart, be true, no thought deny.
O vision, lead me through the night,
And show me paths of guiding light.

Grant me strength to tread the lanes,
Through glitter, dust, and aching pains.
To hear the feasts, the hollow cheer,
Yet feel the cries that few can hear.
Let me pass the youthful den,
But not indulge in fleeting sin.

This life, a thief, a cunning blight,
It feeds on conscience, steals the fight.
The dawn endures, the sun won't set
Will dusk appear, or fade regret?

The sea of time flows ever wide,
Upon its shores, I sit, abide.
I dream of lands where grains of sand
Transform beneath a greater hand.

REVERSION TO REALITY

I dreamt a dream
That led me to wander.
I paddled on while the daze persisted
Ambition, opportunity, achievement
All were mine.
Oftentimes, I would flush,
Conscious of the warm blood beneath,
Certain that I would win.

As I grew older,
The dusk of dawn
Captured me in an hourglass,
As though it had just been turned.
I began to see the fronds of life
Turn golden, dusty, and dun,
Unlike the emerald darkness of leaves
That blew a breeze not long before.

Now, I thought life could win
That it could shatter my dream.
By and by, as life squared up,
Crises rose like mountains.
Reality shook me awake;
A thunderbolt had struck!
I grew frantic, frenzied
A betrayal of faith,
A faint fall of the heart.

Continued.....

TO MY FATHER*

Hidden truths lie behind that face, that smile,
A noble man, admired for his style.
Much adored, with virtues to extol,
Oh, that voice, those steps steady, whole.
Of a great jurist, wise and bold,
Deeds of his past, a story told.

Unique, a life so rounded, so bright,
Reaching wisdom's peak, a guiding light.

Renowned for wit, for grace profound,
A relentless force, justice all around.
His steps were measured, his path well-defined,
Making fairness bloom, a treasure to mankind.
And with a serene mind, retired behind,
Not of the common kind, one of a rarer find.

* This is an acrostic poem

ENDLESS ENDEAVOURS

Unfinished tasks, forgotten dreams,
Relentless toil now merged with clay;
All that I treasured slips away,
Fading like whispers in quiet streams.

My heart no longer stirs or yearns
For the blaze of a thousand desires.
In the prime of chance, dreams smolder low,
Ashes of once-bright, fervent fires.

As time unravels its endless scroll,
Dreams grow dim, retreating from sight,
Until the mind, in quiet despair,
Drifts to a realm where none take flight.
Buried deep where hope once thrived,
Lie remnants of what kept us alive.

Dark, dreadful forms to face,
Life yearns to run forward,
As far as the road extends,
With no milestone to limit it.

I laughed at my fall
And entered the realm of reality
With a smile on my face
And a new music in my heart.
Passing life's archway,
The shadows of the past
Grew fainter and fainter each day.

I left my dream forever,
Burying my stormy griefs,
Though I often watered them with tears.
Now, all that remains is a scab,
Secretly hiding a wound.
And so it is there is no dream!

Yet life goes on,
not with dreams to guide,
but with the quiet strength,
of one who has faced the truth.

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IMMORTAL LIFE

Winds part the clouds;
the sordid sun peers through their shrouds.
Birds hunt for their little ones,
or twitter in the deep green shadows.
All this watches, silently,
as the farmer tills the fields,
as though by their tacit consent.

The ploughman half bent,
pauses to adjust the yoke.
Left, right ten steps, a turn,
half a mile a straight run.
The day's toil, done.

After three score and eleven springs, he dies;
beneath the fields he tilled, he lies,
returned to the great biochemical lab
a debris to be recycled, perhaps.
Turned in the earth's diurnal course,
he shall rise again, an edifice
maybe another Anthony,
preaching from the pulpit.
Or whatever else he may become,
for Mother Nature keeps him still,
recyclable raw material.

I SHALL REMEMBER YOU

Though eternal silence will one day claim me,
And life's long years unravel,
Till at last the grave apprehends me,
And time drifts into oblivion,
Your memory, walking beside me
Like my shadow
I shall never forget.

It leads me through every clime,
Lingering always in my mind.
Can I ever be at ease,
With such pangs my heart to tease?
Your name shall grace my lips,
My breath torn by anguish.

Each sunrise rekindles my search,
Nurturing my hope to find;
Yet each sunset arrives
And leaves me to mourn.
My hopes lie dormant, not dead,
As I slumber through the night.

Death soothe my soul,
Earthly years my peace stole.
Remembrance endure, blossoms fade
But memories do not perish.
They are immortal.

SLEEP

Sleep, a fleeting company of hours,
just me and you
no cry, no hue,
no jest, no smile
a haven of quiet, if only a while.
O nature's priceless balm,
descend upon my leaden eyes;
outrun my weary cries.

Halt these salty streams,
I plead
bury the past in solemn earth,
and grant me this sacred hour
to find a fleeting mirth.

Then, if you will,
let burdens yoke my shoulders sorely;
I'll bear them all,
nor rail against the world's injustice,
if only for this hour of peace.

That's all I ask
no love, no solace,
no fortitude, no bliss.
Neither life, nor joy,
just sleep, sweet sleep,
just peace and peace alone.

WARS

Ah! a grand welcome to thee,
the batter of guns, a shatter of flesh.
Volleys of thunder, the innocents blunder;
an entertaining serenade
where sanity and serenity fade.

Gaping wounds spill and weep,
planes screech through skies steep.
-----a lost eye, an infant crying for it's feed,
-----a pool of blood
-----a growl of guns,
echoing the valiant's deed!

On the killing fields, innocents lie,
foamy bubbles, on lips sweet good byes!!
Back at home,
infants groan and widows cry
.....a pool of tears
.....a howl of guns
.....a mother's call to her son!!!

The earth littered with blood soaked ..dead,
the soldiers tread over stiffened dead.
'Blood' muses the man with tapes of red
O so simple to make,
We'll soon set up a factory for it's sake!

Everlasting pain, eternal grief
the logic of mutual extermination!
this logic shall seize eternity in minutes;
Then there will be,
no blood, no guns and no sons for it,
only souls the eternal beings
and.... this modern ecstasy of war
shall stand subdued.

DEATH

...all that lives must die
traveling from here to eternity...

Death, balmier than any purgative drug,
Oftentimes, I call for you,
Thinking all the while,
When will you deem it fit to smile,
And take me for your home?

Ah, sweet, sweeter than the word!
My life lies unlocked to you.
Steal my soul while I rest.
Why should I brood, burgle my nest;
spare me not for anguished torments
Treats of earthly years!

Catch me at the peak of hours;
Old age should not be ours.
Stop my heart young,
For youth, life's morning breeze,
withered and crumpled leaves.

O, please be my companion forever.
Sail me out of this world,
Where happiness vanishes from weeping grasses,
Where all eyes ooze water,
And all hearts yell.

O, blow my boat faster
Faster still
For what will soothe my heart?
Mortal groans, or an edifice of stone,
Bearing my name when I am gone?

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HELPLESS PLEA

Through the winding paths of fate,
Man is doomed to tread and wait,
Like boulevard trees that softly grieve,
Murmuring songs to the whispering breeze.

Tears may stream from weary eyes,
But they seldom cleanse your sighs.
Put a smile upon your face,
Stand to grief with quiet grace;
Cry for hours, yet you'll see
The earth remains as dry as can be.

A world of cries, a realm of groans,
Echoes through our flesh and bones.
And as autumn claims the golden leaves,
The grave its final hold achieves.

STRIFE HATH TAKEN ITS TOLL

No vision, no dream, no waking fear,
could foretell the sorrow dwelling here.
The echoes of a distant plea,
The harrowed face of humanity.

Through hollow streets where shadows creep,
I hear the wail of hearts that weep.
Pain etched deep in every eye,
as silent prayers ascend the sky:
"O mend my life, this broken thread,
Deliver me from the living dead."

Each glance bears wounds beyond repair,
Grief distilled in the stagnant air.
A witness now to the weight of loss,
I stand beneath despair's dark cross.

Mercy cries, a plea forlorn,
for a land where hope is torn.
O even Hell, with its searing pain,
might offer shelter from this disdain.

LIFE

On this planet, where cares abound,
have you ever thought or found
the secrets hidden in life's robes?
Never, never has it been,
Nor will it ever be.

Life is all around,
In every little thing seen or found
Laboriously clothed and nurtured.
Call it civilization, race, nation, or society.
Life is what we are
The good, the bad... one perfect whole.

And yet, what is it?
A mystery, perhaps too deep,
Yet not an unfathomable sea.
Be it yours or mine,
Or even a humble flea's.

RECOLLECTIONS

Hopes give way to fears,
Eyes surrender tears.
Then there comes a time,
When fear feels no climb.
The luster from our eyes is gone,
Dreams vanish like a fleeting dawn.
We think but cannot think;
Our minds in fumes of sorrow sink.
Pains carve trenches we can't repair,
Tears trace paths of deep despair.
Through alleys of memory we stray,
Where echoes of the past still play.

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THE CITY THAT I LOVE

A lush haven, ever aglow,
Beside a river's gentle flow;
Majestic trees, their branches high,
Embrace the earth, caress the sky.

Beneath their shade, the streets are bright,
Each step a journey of delight.
A place where laughter's music rings,
Where dreams take flight on hopeful wings.

Faces gleam with quiet pride,
Unity walking side by side.
Their joys, their craft, their daily song,
A world where we all belong.

The city hums in tender tone,
Love and life in every stone.
"Let joy rise and grief decline,
Let every heart in peace align."
Let it be Heaven, here and now,
Mirth on every lifted brow.

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